



MTSD Parent Group/School District Collaboration Meeting

Date of Meeting: October 14, 2020

ATTENDANCE:

Chris Brzezinski, *Parent* (Facilitator)
Katie Kretz, *Parent*
Kelly Gocal, *Parent*

Dawn Brzezinski, *Parent*
C.J. Kanash, *Parent*

Dr. Ian Roberts, *Super Intendent*
Timothy Stoops, *Director of Curriculum 6-12*

Darcie Moseley, *Assistance Superintendent*
Joseph Orlando, *Director of Curriculum K-5*

WELCOME

Chris Brzezinski welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the team for agreeing to meet. We began with introductions, promptly at 6:00PM. All participants of tonight's meeting introduced themselves and explained their role. Following introductions Dr. Roberts addressed the room and asked that we proceed with our presentation and allow for discussion at the end of the meeting for the sake of time. All participants agreed.

PRESENTATION

Where did all of this begin?

- He indicated that all of this began with a simple 'feeler' post on Facebook to see if they were the only family that had frustrations and concerns with this year's hybrid model and virtual model of instruction. It turns out that they were not. Within minutes of his first post on Facebook, families began responding and sharing their concerns with the educational components of their children's school year. On September 28, 2020 the MTSD Parent Group was formed on Facebook. The purpose of this group page on Facebook was to allow people to speak freely about the pros and cons of how the current model of instruction is being conducted and what we were experiencing during this pandemic on a daily basis.
- Currently we are over 300 members.

Purpose

- The purpose of tonight's meeting is to present data that the current procedures are not conducive to the overall health and academic process of our students and families. We are here to represent the students and families of Millcreek Township School District and to form a union between parents, teachers, and administrators to design,



implement and successfully execute an educational platform that promotes a strong academic discipline, academic understanding, progression, and excellence - while maintaining a healthy home life and relationship with parents, teachers, administrators, and most importantly the students themselves.

The Concerns & Potential Solutions

1. Concern: Amount of Classwork

- Do not overpopulate google classroom with “busy work”

Potential Solutions:

- Apps should not be a substitute for direct teacher instruction
- Eliminate “dead” apps or apps that don’t function properly, eliminate links that are not enhancing the learning experience or that are cluttered or those that don’t have a user-friendly interface

2. Concern: Direct Instruction / Synchronous Learning

- Originally, as part of the Millcreek Township School District 2020-2021 School Reopening Plan, Synchronous learning was proposed as part of the A/B hybrid model for “at home” learning. This is not consistently happening with all teachers and all schools.

Potential Solutions:

- Sessions could be pre-recorded by teacher
- Live streaming of classrooms could occur
- only needs to be 20 to 30 minutes long
- encouragement to those who may be struggling to use office hours and other means for extra help
- for 100% virtual teachers this occurs daily and possibly longer than 20 to 30 minutes or multiple times
- Mondays should be live streamed via zoom for all students

3. Concern: Are children with IEP's and 504 Plans being given the appropriate time spent with their support team?

- Each representative parent has a child or children with IEP’s or 504 plans. Each parent has voiced concerns with regard to plans not being followed and not enough support being provided due to lack of face-to-face instruction by teachers while at home.
- Currently, the student population of Millcreek Township School District sits at 6,565 students. Of those students (for the 2020-2021 year) 18% of these students have an IEP and 3% have a 504 Plan. That’s a total of 1,378 students who are potentially not being fully supported to the extent that they naturally need.

Potential Solutions:

- More consistent 1:1 time be made available to these students



- If a student is really struggling, a request for 4-day instruction should not be denied.

4. Concern(s): Overall Learning Experience

- How do teachers really know if the concepts are being learned, understood and applied?
- How do teachers know if students are doing the work and not a parent or someone else?
- If there is need for further involvement for an individual student, teacher must first notice there is an issue and coordinate with parents and student an appropriate time for individualized or group assistance
- Parents should not be expected to be teachers or be teaching assistants.

Potential Solutions:

- More zoom opportunities for all students
- Tests and quizzes to be done while child is at school with studying to occur while at home

5. Concern: Google classroom formatting

- There continues to be huge inconsistencies with how all teachers are utilizing Google Classroom and the time in which assignments are given.

Potential Solutions:

- Formatting and use of Google Classroom needs to be standardized across all schools for all teachers.
- All assignments should have due dates
- Assignments due times need to also be consistent
- Assignments should be required to be posted the day prior or no later than the start of the day for that class
- YouTube Videos should NOT be a substitution for instruction
- When responding to assignments in Google classroom, please acknowledge by stating “graded” or “accepted”.

6. Concern: Textbooks / Curriculum

- Hardbound textbooks and/or online textbooks are not consistently being made available to students.
- Teachers are taking some liberties and not following the curriculum and only providing “packets” to children to learn from

Potential Solutions:

- All teachers should be teaching from a textbook
- Hardbound textbooks should be made available to all children
- Teachers should not be given the autonomy to create their own curriculum



7. Concern: Email Communication

- Student Outlook is not accessible to parents (without being logged in as the student)
- K-?? – a lot of these students are not yet email savvy
- Emails from parents to teachers going unanswered – some teachers have told students that they “won’t respond to emails from parents”

Potential Solutions:

- Allow parent access to student email
- Uphold the professional courtesy requirement of teacher’s responding to emails that a parent may send
- Eliminate Google Classroom messages being sent to email and use strictly for correspondence between student/parent and teacher

8. Concern: In Person Meetings

- Requests for In-Person Meetings for things such as an IEP or Parent/Teacher Conferences continue to be denied

Potential Solutions:

- Allow for in person meetings as social distancing can occur and is already in place for the educational setting
- Most IEP or 504 meetings have 3-5 teachers / support members and 1-2 parents = 5-7 people in a room

9. Concern: Assignment Pick-Up/Drop Off (for virtual learning)

- The pick-up and drop-off of assignments for virtual learning children is proving to be logistically difficult.

Potential Solutions:

- Can materials be scanned and sent as a .pdf to print, completed, and scan back via Google Classroom or email
- For those that don’t have the means to print or scan, teachers can make packets available that can be picked up either at the designated school breakfast/lunch pick-up location that best suits the parent or at the school with an agreed appropriate time that the parent can attend

Conclusion of Presentation: As we continue to navigate through this unprecedented time, it is absolutely imperative that we work together, sharing ideas and plans, working collaboratively, and pouring every effort and resource into improving the educational experience for our children. Our end goal should and must be to set the gold standard and be the leading school district in Pennsylvania. Once again, we want to thank you for agreeing to meet with us and give us the opportunity to make this presentation to you. We hope that we can collaborate on improved systems and procedures that will benefit the student, teachers, parents, and administrators so that we may truly be “Stronger Together”.



OPEN FORUM FOR DISCUSSION

Dr. Roberts thanked us for the presentation and is extremely excited for he and his team to collaborate with this group.

- What is the “Big Ask”? – The parent group would like to see standardization of synchronous learning occurring across all classes and schools. Clarification was made that we are asking for “instruction” to be conducted by the teachers while the children are at home – either through live streaming or recorded lessons completed by the teacher. All members of the MTSD team were not aware that this was not occurring. They agree that it should be.

- Email communication was brought up. Members of the Parent Group informed the room that this is a big stumbling block, as some teachers are not responding to emails. Mrs. Moseley indicated that all teachers should be responding to emails and by no means should a teacher tell a student that they won’t respond to parent emails. She will help support this communication back to the schools. But, if there continues to be issues with this the parent should escalate the email to the principal. If no resolution occurs, feel free to reach out to her office at any time.

- Textbooks and Online textbooks: Mr. Orlando and Mr. Stoops indicated that all students have access to hardcover books. These would have been made available the first few days of school. Please reach out individually to each teacher and request a book, if you don’t have one. If you have any problems with this, please communicate with their respective offices:
 - Director of Curriculum, Elementary K – 5, [Joseph Orlando](#) - 814.835.5328
 - Director of Curriculum, Grades 6 – 12, [Timothy Stoops](#) - 814.835.5328

- Both Mr. Stoops and Mr. Orlando stated that curriculum has been approved for the year and that teachers should be teaching the assigned curriculum and not creating their own. Again, if there are concerns you should reach out to the teacher, principal of your assigned schools or to their respective offices.

- In-Person Meetings: Mrs. Moseley stated that In-Person meetings have been occurring. However, if any staff person requests to participate in the meeting virtually (due to potential COVID exposure concerns) – this has been approved. This is an agreement that the school district made with the teacher’s union. However, if a parent would like an In-Person Meeting to be conducted, this can be accommodated with the understanding that some support staff may be participating virtually. Each situation will be taken on a ‘case-by-case’ basis.

- Learning: Much discussion took place regarding this. Several members from the Parent Group spoke of their own experiences – raised their concerns and concerns from other parents in the district regarding whether children are truly ‘learning’ concepts being brought to them. How do we quantify their success or failure? Grades



are not necessarily going to show understanding due to children being at home and either having information in front of them while completing quizzes and tests or (in some cases) parents/others completing their work just to get it done. Our children's future is critical, and they can't afford to lose any more opportunities to be successful in their education. So many children are failing. The MTSD Team stated that they would have to take this back and discuss this and make plans to address these concerns. They were grateful for the healthy discussion regarding this concern and they weren't fully aware of what was occurring.

- **Mental Health & Relationships:** Following the learning discussion, the mental health of our children came up in addition to how this year's education platformed has changed relationships within the household. Each parent shared personal stories of how COVID has affected their life – just like everyone else. However, by having to be “teachers at home” – this has negatively impacted relationships at home. The continued frustrations of inconsistencies and the constant back and forth with teachers and students is wearing on the mental health of the children – especially with those children who aren't performing well.
- **IEP / 504 / MTSD Culture:** A member of the Parent Group brought up a concern that parents have put in requests for their children to go back to 4-days in person due to failing grades. As a group, we have reports of 30+ parents who have made requests and all have been denied. The common response is that the student isn't “struggling enough” or “the need isn't great enough” to approve this. However, no follow up is being provided....such as the coordination of additional support for the child.

Additionally, it was brought up that an attempt was made by a member of the Parent Group to obtain data related to the percentage of overall students in the district with IEP's or 504 Plans and on 5 separate occasions was told that this information couldn't be given out because these teachers/administrators would “get in trouble” or would be “written up”. Dr. Roberts and Mrs. Moseley were saddened to hear of this. This Parent Representative also shared that there seems to be a large number of teachers and administrators that aren't feeling supported, but also don't feel comfortable speaking up because of fear of retaliation. This Parent suggested that the district embrace the book “Crucial Conversations” and that the policies and practices noted in this book be applied in the district. Dr. Roberts was familiar with the book, as he had read it on 3 different occasions. Dr. Roberts

CLOSING RECAP / TAKEAWAYS

Dr. Roberts took some time to review his key takeaways from today's meetings that they would be taking back to the rest of the team to discuss and take action:

1. Synchronous Learning
2. IEP / 504 Meetings – In Person Requests
3. IEP / 504 Students – Are the goals being met for each student?
4. Workload Challenges
5. Simplification of instruction



6. Standardization of processes
7. How can we confirm that learning is happening?
8. Hardbound Textbooks or Online Textbooks

The Parent Group asked what the next steps would be and Dr. Roberts indicated that they would be taking all of this information back to the team and share. They would be developing plans to move forward with improvements and that we could look at circling back in about 2 weeks. If another meeting is needed, we could certainly coordinate that. Additionally, if there are more concerns please utilize his office and Mrs. Moseley's office as a resource. He also reminded the group of the upcoming Town Hall Meetings, which we stated we were signed up for and would encourage others to do the same. *(Below is information about the Town Hall Meetings as a reference for those reviewing these meeting notes):*

STRONGER TOGETHER

Superintendent Dr. Ian Roberts,
invites all MTSD parents and community members to virtually attend and discuss the Fall 2020 school year.

Elementary
Tuesday, Oct. 20
6:30 PM

Middle
Wednesday, Oct. 21
6:30 PM

High School
Thursday, Oct. 22
6:30 PM

REGISTER NOW

Register Online at www.mtsd.org/strongertogether

Elementary School Night, October 20 6:30 PM

Middle School Night, October 21 6:30 PM

High School Night, October 22 6:30 PM

The meeting adjourned roughly at 7:45PM.

*Meeting Notes Taken and
Respectfully Submitted
by: Katie Kretz*